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PROGRESS OF THE REUNION MOVEMENT.

The signs of the times are full of promise in behalf of the speedy reunion of the separated branches of the Presbyterian Church in this country. The parted stream is soon to flow again in one channel. Those who rejoice in the present, and can remember the painful past, are "like them that dream." To younger men, now upon the stage, who would learn the lessons of the past, and act well their parts in the closing scenes of the separation, the record of strife, so speedily followed by division; the prevalence of jealousies and competitions, marking so many years of the period of separation, and the rapid return of brotherly kindness and charity, hastening the fullness of time for reunion, must be an intensely interesting study.

For nearly a quarter of a century, Old School and New School were generally regarded as honorary titles, by those who accepted the one or the other. Until within a few years, a declaration in favor of uniting the divided church was generally received with suspicion, and very often with reproach. On either side, it was taken for granted that the sin of schism was chargeable upon the opposite party, and that the breach could only be healed by retraction or absorption. A great change has taken place in the spirit and views of both parties. The last few years of discussion and negotiation have been characterized by a rapid renewal of charity and confidence, and a growing evidence of oneness of sentiment and spirit, that are as surprising as they are grateful to every Christian heart. As the contest, which so soon ended in disruption, was mainly fed by evil surmisings and mutual accusations, so the work of peace is to be a short work, because of the prevalence and power of love and meekness, of patience and forbearance, under the guidance of the God of peace.

Though reunion is almost universally regarded as an event of certain and speedy accomplishment, much may depend on what remains to be done, in order that it may be happy and permanent. The time and the manner of its completion should be wisely chosen, to render sure the harvest of blessing for which we have been sowing in tears. In order that the steps yet to be taken may be wise, it may be well to trace the progress of the movement thus far, and note the indications of Providence, pointing out the way by which the end may be best secured. The present posture of the question has not been attained by man's wisdom, but by Divine guidance, and there is still need of wisdom from on high. The providential leadings, from the first, seem to have been in favor of the method of consummation to which both churches are

now tending. A retrospect of the discussions, overtures, negotiations and ecclesiastical action, in the progress of the reunion movement, will show that its friends, in contradistinction from those who have been unprepared for it or opposed to it, have ever been for it, on equal terms and without concessions or pledges. They have regarded both churches as intelligent and honest in their adherence to their common standards, and they have desired no other basis or bond of union. Whatever they may have done, in proposing explanations and pledges as a part of terms of union, has been by way of concession to others, and for the sake of union, which they feared might not otherwise be gained. The early friends of reunion, and all who from time to time have been brought to stand with them, have exhibited a remarkable unanimity of spirit and views on the whole subject. They have ever been prepared, for themselves, to form the union upon the basis of the standards alone, and they have ever declared the prevalence of restored confidence and fraternity to be the necessary and sufficient evidence of readiness for it. There is no doubt but this is the prevailing view, at this time, in both branches.

The first formal movement in favor of reunion, in which any definite opinion was expressed in regard to the basis on which it should be formed, began in 1864, when the Old School General Assembly met in Newark, N. J. A meeting was held of ministers and elders, in attendance upon that Assembly, to consider the question of reunion and to propose measures for its accomplishment. A paper was adopted and published, not only urging the necessity of union and suggesting measures adapted to prepare the churches for it, but presenting what was regarded as the proper basis for it. This paper says: "It is believed that the great majority in each branch sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures, and approve the same Government and Discipline. On this basis we may reunite, mutually regarding and treating the office bearers and church courts of each branch as coordinate elements in the reconstruction. There are difficulties in the way of repairing the breaches of Zion, which must be met and overcome by well-considered methods and in a spirit of forbearance and prudence. Reunion can not be accomplished, nor is it to be desired, without the restoration of a spirit of unity and fraternity. We believe this spirit exists and is constantly increasing. That which should first engage the attention of the friends of reunion should be to find out how far unity of sentiment and kindness of feeling prevail." Here the Confession of Faith, received as it prescribes, without anything more,

is presented as the proposed basis; and the conditions precedent to union are, that there shall be, and be found to be, "unity of sentiment and kindness of feeling." This document was signed by 70 Ministers and 43 Ruling Elders, who were all present at the Assembly at Newark, and who represented the reunion sentiment of every section of the Church. Among the signers of the Newark paper are to be found the names of three editors of the Church, who also advocated its sentiments in their papers.

The same views were presented the same year in a sermon preached at the opening of the New School General Assembly, at Dayton, Ohio, in which these "three prime conditions" of reunion were declared to be: 1. "An open and manly union on equal terms;" 2. "That both accept in its integrity the Presbyterian system of church order;" and 3. "That the reunion be simply on the basis of the standards which we equally accept." This discourse and the Newark paper were widely published and universally endorsed by the friends of reunion as presenting the true basis on which the two churches should be united. Before this, several Presbyteries of each body had memorialized their General Assemblies, asking them to take steps to secure the union of the two bodies, and in the religious press of the two churches much had been written in this behalf; but it may be safely affirmed that no other method of union was advocated by the friends of reunion, except upon the basis of the common standards of the two churches; while those who were opposed to union ever claimed the necessity of outside guards and guaranties.

The *Reunion Presbyterian* was established in January, 1855, as an organ of the friends of reunion. It was an exponent of the advanced thought and earnest feeling of its time in both branches. It advocated reunion upon the standards alone. Its editors and correspondents discussed the whole ground, since included in the plan of the Joint Committee. They approved all the principles to be found in the several items of that plan, and yet they propose the standards alone as the basis, and confidence as the bond of union. In their first number the editor says: "The two branches ought to come together on the sole basis of our common standards; and, if they can not do so, it were probably better that reunion should not be attempted." "The standards held in common by the two branches are the only standards held by each branch. If these standards are the freely chosen and approved basis of doctrine in each branch, why will they not be a suitable and sufficient basis for both churches united." "There is every reason to believe that each branch is pledged, in good faith and in the same sense of terms, to our common

Confession." "If we undertake to interpret the Confession we shall not know where to stop." "The desire for a new basis is the offspring of suspicion. Reunion must be the result of mutual confidence and love."

In the first official action of the two bodies, in the way of negotiation for reunion, the same view is very distinctly presented. Memorials had been sent up to the Assemblies of 1866, which met in St. Louis, Mo., and had been referred to the proper committees to report thereon. Two brethren, one of each Assembly, who were severally charged by their respective committees to prepare action in answer to these overtures, had an interview. The New School representative said: "Our brethren think that your Assembly should take the initiative." To which it was replied: "Our brethren are not able to see the propriety of this view, which is often expressed, but they are quite willing to accept the honor that it secures." A Joint Reunion Committee was proposed to negotiate for reunion on equal terms, and upon our common standards as the basis, and confidence as the bond. This was agreed to and action was accordingly prepared, which was approved by the Committees and adopted by the Assemblies. The action of the two Assemblies need not be recited in detail. The meaning of the writers of the action adopted, and of the friends of union voting for it, in either Assembly, was reunion upon the standards as the basis, to be accomplished as soon as mutual confidence and love were found so to prevail as to open the way for it, in regard to which the Joint Committee were appointed to confer and inquire and report.

When the Joint Committee was called to meet in New York in February, 1867, separate meetings were first held by agreement. The Old School found the notion still current that they should lead in the negotiations. Accordingly it was proposed, as the proper course of proceeding under the instructions of the Assembly, to unite with the other Committee in sending to the presbyteries of both bodies an overture asking answers to several questions, whereby the Joint Committee might be able to form an opinion as to whether there was such unity in doctrine, such restoration of confidence and fraternity, and such desire for reunion, and confidence that it would be harmonious and permanent, as to justify further steps for its accomplishment. A paper to this effect was prepared and sent to the other Committee. The response to this communication led to a joint meeting and a full conference on the whole subject. In the Joint Committee, in justification of the proposition made by the Old School Committee, a member said, that under our instructions our first work was to inquire

whether the two churches were so agreed as to be prepared for reunion; and, if this were found to be so, the union might be consummated upon our common standards, received and adopted in the use of the same formula of subscription. To this it was replied by a brother of the New School Committee: "We adopted the standards in the use of this formula thirty years ago, and yet we divided. We must have an understanding or we may again have difficulty." He was understood to be in favor of a written covenant, and there were others who agreed with him. However, as the conference progressed, and point after point was discussed, no opinion was so frequently expressed and assented to as that when it shall be made to appear that the churches are really prepared for union—when unity and confidence are found to prevail—the points of difficulty will have disappeared. This conference had the happy effect to make it manifest that the difficulties in the way of reunion were less than had been anticipated. An adjournment for two months was agreed upon, and in the mean time information was to be sought in regard to the state of opinion in the different sections of the church, as every one might have opportunity. This meeting attempted nothing in regard to a basis. A member of the Joint Committee, soon after the adjournment, published, in the *Rochester Union*, the following statement, which fairly represents this meeting: "After a free interchange of views it was found that there was nothing in the way of reunion, so far as the members of the Committee were concerned, but it was deemed best to test, so far as possible, the sense of the people comprising the two general bodies of Presbyterians before taking definite action. For this purpose the Joint Committee adjourned to meet again on the first day of May. If the evidence which may be obtained by the members of the Committee in the meantime shall warrant, it is possible that at the May meeting some decisive action may be taken, looking to the consummation of union, though it may require some little time to perfect the work. Communications from members of the Church who are interested, and who desire to make suggestions, may be addressed to any member of the Committee."

When the Joint Committee met again, May 1, 1867, after full conference, a report was agreed upon, proposing the reunion of the two churches "as independent bodies, and on equal terms," and proposing "Terms and Recommendations suited to meet the demands of the case." This report proposed that "the reunion shall be effected upon the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common standards," and yet its first item contained this explanatory clause: "Its fair historical sense, as it is accepted by the two bodies, in opposition to

Antinomianism and Fatalism on the one hand, and to Arminianism and Pelagianism on the other, shall be regarded as the sense in which it is received and adopted." There was a demand, especially by those who were opposed to reunion, or unprepared for it, made manifest in the public discussions, and reaching the Committee by private letters, for pledges and limitations in regard not only to doctrine, but other points. It seemed necessary, in order to meet this demand and fully discuss supposed differences, that terms of union should be presented in detail, and the Committee recommended their publication for one year for "deliberate examination" before a final report.

During the interval between the meetings of the Assemblies of 1867 and 1868, there were many who persistently demanded other and better pledges and limitations, and there was an earnest desire to meet the wishes of such persons, and, if possible, secure their acquiescence. At the same time there were unmistakable evidences that the friends of reunion preferred the standards alone as the basis. To this effect several presbyteries gave an expression of their views, and such was the report of the Committee appointed by the Philadelphia Convention to prepare a basis of union. The amendment of that basis, as moved by Dr. H. B. Smith, was not an expression of his views of what the basis should be, but a peace-offering, intended to remove prejudices, in regard to the views of his own church. Those who voted for this amendment, did not desire it, for its own sake. Those of the New School who voted for it, had the same motives with the mover, and Old School men voted for it as an expression of confidence in Dr. Smith and his brethren. So strong was the preference for the basis, as reported, that the amendment was carried only by a vote of 68 ayes to 27 nays, the nays being chiefly from the Old School. Those who voted for the amendment, no doubt, agreed with Dr. Musgrave, who said at the time: "I would never have offered such an addition to the report of our Committee. I would have been perfectly satisfied to have it as it originally stood. But now that it has been introduced, and that by a respected brother of the New School, I find, sir, it would be impolitic to withdraw it, or vote it down; because, sir, it expresses precisely what the Old School would regard as satisfactory. Let us retain this amendment, and mark the prediction, that if you do, this union will be consummated." It may be safely said, that the only favor which this amendment ever received from the friends of reunion, was because it promised to relieve the doubts of many, who feared the want of unity of sentiment in the two bodies. In this direction, its adoption was eminently wise, and its usefulness has been very great.

When the Joint Committee met again, in March, 1868, the almost universal expectation prevailed that the doctrinal basis of the Philadelphia Convention would be adopted. It would doubtless have received the approval of a large majority, in each branch. The Old School members of the Joint Committee proposed this, but for the sake of unanimity on the other side, another explanatory clause was added. This was regarded by many, for a time, as unfortunate, but it has resulted in good. Opposition to the explanatory clauses of the first item of the report, has been connected with acquiescence in all other parts of the plan on the part of one branch, while nothing has been lost on the other. There were, in both churches and in both Assemblies in 1868, minorities who were not satisfied with the report of the Joint Committee. In the Albany Assembly, the minority claimed that the Gurley Amendment did not sufficiently guard the church against error. A clause also in the action of the Harrisburgh Assembly, on the report of the Joint Committee, was interpreted by them as binding the united body to allow any doctrine, which it might be claimed had ever been held by any one, in either branch. These views were not acquiesced in by the majority in the Albany Assembly, but they were earnestly maintained by the minority, and regarded of such importance by some, that one after another of them said they would accept the other parts of the basis, if the explanatory clauses of the first item were dropped. This was regarded as hopeful by the majority, who had ever favored the standards alone, as the proper basis. It was thought to be highly important to satisfy as many of these brethren as possible; and, after consultation, a majority of the Old School Reunion Committee being present, it was deemed expedient that the Assembly, after passing the basis reported, should propose to the other Assembly, by way of making the basis "more simple and more expressive of mutual confidence," to drop from the first item the Smith and Gurley Amendments, and this was done by a vote almost unanimous. This action was telegraphed to Harrisburgh, and a special committee was sent to present it to the other Assembly, and ask its concurrence. Before this, every step that had been taken to prepare a basis, adding pledges and explanations, had been taken by way of concession to those who had been disinclined to union. Now this class, or many of them, seemed to have changed their views, and it required no sacrifice to accede to their wishes, which were the wishes, as it was believed, of a large majority in both branches.

After the Committee, appointed to go to Harrisburgh and present the proposed amendment, had left Albany, a telegraphic despatch was received from Harrisburgh, asking wheth-

er the Tenth Article of the basis would be given up, provided the proposed amendment of the First Article was assented to. It was thought best not to complicate the work of the Committee or to take up this proposition, which was only an individual suggestion. A different view, however, would have been taken, in all probability, if the thought had occurred to the persons consulted, that the dropping of the Tenth Article was really necessary, in order that the basis might be the standards pure and simple, and that this change would also be a concession to the minority of the other branch, requiring no sacrifice of principle in either party.

The Committee sent to Harrisburg arrived too late to accomplish their mission, and many friends of reunion felt that the effort to secure the amendment had left the negotiations in a most unfavorable posture. Time has shown that this was an erroneous opinion. The proposition for amendment gave reasons in favor of it, which could not but insure every one that it was offered in good faith and in growing confidence and fraternity, while the answer to the Protest of the minority gave conclusive evidence that the Old School Assembly did not distrust the soundness in the faith of the other body, nor regard it as desiring undue latitude of opinion. Nothing was done to weaken the bonds of fraternal confidence, but much to strengthen them. It is well, it may now be conceded, that it was too late for the Assembly at Harrisburg to consider the proposed amendment. It is well that the New School members of the Joint Committee declined to make any suggestions in regard to the amendment proposed at Albany, until their presbyteries had acted upon the overture regularly sent down by the two Assemblies. A new phase had been given to the reunion movement by the action of the Albany Assembly, and time was needed to consider it. It is also well that the *Pittsburgh Circular* was issued, in the interest of the supplemental action of the Albany Assembly, asking action, not only upon the basis, but in favor of the amendment. That circular had the effect to increase and unite the friends of union in the Old School branch, while it resulted in preparing that branch for reunion by the action of the Assemblies of 1869. It contained nothing to impair mutual trust and affection. It is well, moreover, that the consideration of the question of eliminating from the basis the Tenth Article, was postponed until now. Everything that has occurred since the Assemblies met has resulted in leading the two churches toward an adjustment, by which the reunion will be on equal terms, and to each more fair, honorable and safe, than if either report of the Joint Committee had been adopted. It is a curious as well as an interesting part of the history of the

reunion movement, that in yielding to the fears of the doubting, and to the importunities of opposers, by trying to add explanations to the standards for the sake of liberty or safety, almost all have become convinced that the most practicable and safe basis is the standards pure and simple.

Are any disposed to ask why it is that the Joint Committee have lost so much time in negotiating for explanations and guaranties? or why they did not at first, as their instructions indicated, propose "union upon the basis of our common standards?" The answer is obvious. The Joint Committee, like the whole Church, were not prepared for such a report without investigation and conference among themselves; and, if they had been, they were instructed by the Assemblies first to inquire whether reunion was "desirable and practicable," and whether it could be accomplished in a manner that would be "consistent with agreement in doctrine, order and policy, on the basis of our common standards, and the prevalence of mutual confidence and love." In prosecuting their inquiries, it was necessary to canvass all the questions in regard to which they prepared "Terms and Recommendations" in their reports. It was necessary that every question of supposed difference, whether of doctrine, order or administration, should be harmonized, not only in the Committee, but also in the two churches. When the Joint Committee entered upon their work, a majority of both churches believed that there were important differences in regard to doctrine, the examination of ministers, theological seminaries, publications, the mixed churches and other things. How could these questions be examined and discussed with any satisfactory result in the absence of some such terms as were reported? How, especially, could the agreement of the churches in regard to doctrine, which has ever been regarded as the main point of difficulty, have been ascertained but by the discussion, before the presbyteries, of some such statement as is furnished in the first item of the "Terms of Union" of the report? Something like these explanatory causes was a necessity to secure such a comparison of views as would give assurance in regard to unity of sentiment. To have proposed the standards alone as the basis of union, without any "Terms," as the reports call them, or "Measures," in the language of the Assembly, would have been to have insured defeat without the compensation of having made any progress toward the object in view. It is safe to say that without "Terms," covering the points of difference supposed to exist between the two churches, the discussions could not have been so conducted as to make manifest, in so short a time, the substantial unity which almost

every one now believes to prevail. No other means, it is believed, would have served to bring the two churches so soon to trust each other and unite on their common standards.

The friends of reunion are now anxiously looking to the Assemblies of 1869 to complete the work. This may be done if the action of the presbyteries of the two bodies shall indicate a readiness for it. Some have erroneously supposed that this can not be done constitutionally, unless three-fourths of the presbyteries of each body shall have formally approved the same basis. There is no constitutional provision for reunion or for division. As reunion does not involve a change or modification of the constitution, as some may suppose, it is not, nor has it ever been, necessary to overture the subject to the presbyteries. If it were true that it involved a constitutional change, a vote of only a majority of the presbyteries would be requisite to carry it. The provision of the Constitution on this subject is as follows: "Before any overtures or regulations proposed by the Assembly to be established as constitutional rules shall be obligatory on the churches, it shall be necessary to transmit them to all the presbyteries, and to receive the returns of at least a majority of them, in writing, approving thereof." (Form of Government, Chapter xii, Section vi.) The opinion that a vote of three-fourths of the presbyteries is necessary to consummate reunion must have been inferred from the provision in the "Terms" reported by the Joint Committee. This was first proposed to put a quietus upon the charge of precipitancy, which was so widely made in both bodies. The right to form a union, like the right to agree upon a division, which both parties held in 1837, may be regarded as extra-constitutional. To heal a division can not be unconstitutional. It may be that explicit authority to form a union with an independent church may be wanting, and yet it is implied in the powers belonging to the General Assembly "of superintending the concerns of the whole church," (Ch. xii, Sec. v.) Unions have been formed by the highest judicatory of the Church with other bodies in several cases: with the Presbytery of Suffolk in 1749; between the Synods of New York and Philadelphia in 1758; with the Presbytery of Dutchess County in 1766; with the Presbytery of Donnegal in 1768; with the Presbytery of Charleston in 1811; and with the Associate Reformed Synod in 1822. In all these cases independent bodies were brought into union with our Church, and it was done by a mere resolution of our highest court.

The Assemblies of 1869 have not only the right to complete the reunion, but it is expedient to do so. The overture sent to the Presbyteries has failed in one branch, and the As-

semblies now stand in relation to the question of reunion as before the negotiations were commenced, except that it is now well known that the two churches earnestly desire to be one, and it is perhaps as well known, or will be by the time of the meeting of the Assemblies, on what terms they desire reunion. The instruments have been tuned up to concert pitch and the strings are safe. The Assemblies are as well prepared to finish the work of union as in any case in the past. The defeat of the basis reported has proceeded in the Old School body on this assumption. The defeat was made sure by the *Pittsburgh Circular*. That paper asked for the amendment of the first item of the report by leaving out the Smith and Gurley Amendments; and it said, in regard to the article thus amended, "As it involves the creation of no new constitutional rule, nor any modification of a preëxisting rule, *it is self-evident* that provided it is, in the mean time, indicated as the preference of the Church, it may be adopted by the Assemblies of 1869 and made the basis of reunion by a mere resolution." This "preference" has been declared by the Old School body almost without exception. If the action of the presbyteries of the other branch, in accordance with the recent suggestions of its Committee on reunion, shall favor the change of the First Article and the dropping of the Tenth Article, there can be no objection to union by the action of the Assemblies. Action by the presbyteries of one body in favor of union on the standards by vote of the Assemblies, and action in the other branch in favor of union upon the overture sent down, amended by leaving out the Tenth Article and the explanatory clauses of the First Article, are the same in substance and spirit, if not in form. Those who are not prepared for reunion may be expected to raise objections. It may be made a question whether the action of the Old School Presbyteries in favor of union upon the standards pure and simple is properly interpreted, as ruling out the Smith and Gurley amendments only, or, with them, also the Tenth Article, or also all other items of the terms of union. Mere technicalities, however, are not likely to hinder the Assemblies from acting, if they feel that they have the mind of the Church. It is to be expected that the friends of reunion will carefully inquire what is needed, even for the sake of form, and fully inform the Assemblies or instruct their Commissioners as to their wishes.

The question as to whether the Tenth Article shall be retained or expunged from the terms of union is one of little importance. A minority in both bodies are opposed to the examination of ministers in passing from one presbytery to another, as a means of defense against unsound doctrine, for

the reason that this class believe it to be an invasion of the rights of the ministry. They hold that the constitution has provided other and better safeguards against error. These minorities have, of late years, been diminishing among the New School and increasing in the other body. At present, at least, four-fifths in each branch are agreed on the subject. This is manifest from the action of the Assemblies and Presbyteries of each, in 1868, approving the Tenth Article, which abolishes the imperative clause of the examination rule of the Assembly of 1837 and yet acknowledges the right of examination. Both bodies hold the right of examination; and that it should be practiced only in exceptional cases. The action in favor of the Tenth Article gives satisfactory evidence, moreover, that the suspicions and jealousies which led to the adoption of the imperative rule have passed away, and that latitudinarian tendencies, charged in former times, do not exist. It is inconceivable that the two churches should have approved the Tenth Article on any other supposition than agreement in regard to the right of examination and mutual confidence.

The question arises, "Why should the Tenth Article be dropped after having been approved by large majorities in both churches?" The answer is, that it is "more expressive of mutual confidence" that the basis should be "the standards pure and simple." If explanations and covenants are not wise or needful in regard to doctrine, much more are they not so in regard to order and discipline. Our common standards require us to receive and adopt our system of doctrine, while we are only required to approve of our government and discipline. If the Tenth Article is retained, the union will not be upon our standards alone, but upon them with a special interpretation that will have the force of a constitutional rule. We may safely trust each other in this matter, in regard to which there is such harmony of sentiment.

It would be surprising if those who hold extreme views in regard to the right of examination should be found unwilling to dispense with the Tenth Article. If it remains in the terms of union, those who are in favor of the imperative rule of the Assembly of 1837, and who may believe that there may be need of such an enactment at some future time of danger from the prevalence of error, will be cut off by the covenant of reunion, if it is retained, from invoking the aid of such a preventive. On the other hand, those who deny the right of examination ought surely to be willing to give up an article declaring that "It is *agreed* that the presbyteries possess the right to examine ministers applying for admission from other presbyteries." A distinguished minister, who voted against the Tenth Article in the Harrisburg Assembly, said: "I am

willing, for the sake of reunion, to grant the right of examination, but I can not vote that the right is granted in the Constitution." Every one holding such views will surely be willing to set aside an article that expounds the Constitution in opposition to his own convictions.

The Tenth Article may well be dropped, not only because of the substantial agreement of the two churches in regard to the doctrine of examination, not only because its retention is in violation of the fraternal and popular idea of union upon the standards, without explanation or pledge, but also because the question is fully and properly met by the Fourth Article of the "Terms of Union" reported by the Joint Committee, which provides that "No precedent which does not stand approved by both the bodies shall be of any authority until re-established in the united body." This article, which was also a part of the first report of the Joint Committee, was intended mainly as an adjustment of the question of examination. For this purpose it is all-sufficient and to be preferred to the Tenth Article. Precedents establishing the right of examination by the presbyteries stand approved by both bodies. Before the division there had been six deliverances on the subject, viz. : in 1801, 1816, 1825, 1834, 1835 and 1837, in all of which the right of examination is affirmed, except in that of 1834. There has been no action since the division, except by the New School Assembly of 1838, and this only repealed the imperative clause of the action of 1837. The Fourth Article of the "Terms of Union," therefore, secures in better form all that is needed in regard to examination, as well as all other precedents. If, however, the Fourth Article were also dropped, the reunion of two independent bodies on equal terms would nullify all conflicting precedents and usages, until approved by the united body. There seems to be no reason for retaining the Tenth Article, while there are many considerations in favor of abandoning it.

It may be regarded as settled that a majority in both churches will be ready to give up the explanatory clauses of the First Article. While there is no good reason for the opinion that these explanatory clauses allow a latitude of opinion or expression that would impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system, it must be confessed that they do imply distrust and suspicion. On the other hand, if they are left out and the standards alone are made the basis, there is in them all the liberty than any man can ask. No one will say that the Smith and Gurley amendments provide for any more liberty than is secured in Chapter xx, Section 2, where it is said: "God alone is Lord of the conscience and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which

are in an anything contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship."

This article will be closed by a suggestion in regard to the method of consummating the union, which is the result of a patient investigation and observation of the reunion movement from the first. The suggestion is that the union be formed by a concurrent resolution of the Assemblies of 1869, upon the basis of our own common standards, which is the basis of union in both churches, recognizing the independency, the equality and the authority of each body, with no other bond of union than the common formula of subscription, which binds the office-bearers and church courts of each body to each other, and to their common symbols of faith and government. There is now no need of a single one of the "Terms of Union" reported by the Joint Reunion Committee. They have served their purpose, and, like the articles of union, at first agreed upon between the Old and New School Presbyterians in the South, may safely be dismissed. The two churches are now known to be of one mind and heart in regard to every question which has been the subject of negotiation. Unity has been ascertained and confidence restored.

Such a reunion will be consistent with the action of the Assemblies of 1866, by which the negotiations were inaugurated. The proposition of these bodies was union "at the earliest time, consistent with agreement in doctrine, order and policy," union upon "the prevalence of mutual confidence and love," and union "upon our common standards." Neither Assembly speaks of any basis but "our common standards." The Old School Assembly directs its Committee "to suggest measures" if union is found to be "desirable and practicable." The New School Assembly indorse this action and instruct their Committee "to confer on the subject" with the Committee of the other branch. The conference of the Joint Committee, and the discussion and action upon their reports, have made manifest that reunion "is desirable and practicable." What more, therefore, is needed than to dismiss all outside covenants and come together on the common standards? It is only required that the Assemblies of 1869 resolve to unite and the work will be done and well done.

An examination of the several "Terms of Union" will make it manifest that reunion upon the standards, by a simple resolution, without the adoption of any one of these terms, is all that is needed. There is no need even of the *First Article*. Why should it be said: "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament *shall be* acknowledged to be the inspired word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice"? Our

common standards declare this, and all our ministers, ruling elders and deacons, of both churches, have been ordained by its solemn acknowledgment. Why should the contract of union say: "The Confession of Faith *shall continue* to be received and adopted as containing the system of doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures"? Our common standards and our common ordination vows provide for this continuance. Why should we say: "The Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States *shall be* approved as containing the principles and rules of our polity"? Are we to take new vows? Reunion will not absolve any one from the responsibility of his ordination engagements. If the Assemblies unite upon the standards, as a basis, by a simple resolution, the united church will be as firmly bound to all that the First Article provides for, as are the separate churches. Let the First Article be dismissed, giving it the credit of having been very useful, in bringing the two churches to see their agreement in doctrine. As to the *Second Article*, which provides that "All the ministers and churches, embraced in the two bodies, *shall be admitted* to the same standing, in the united body, which they may hold in their respective connections, up to the consummation of the union," it can not be doubted that a resolution, uniting two independent bodies, carries with it this equal standing. A special act of the united body would be necessary to deprive any minister or church of equal standing with all others. The language, "shall be admitted," implies that union will make a new church, in which the rights of its office-bearers and church courts need to be defined—which is certainly erroneous. No one can fear that an attempt will be made to deprive any minister or church of good standing in the united church, for any preëxisting cause. In regard to the imperfectly organized churches, for which this article also provides, happily we are agreed, and have so expressed ourselves by vote. We can moreover settle this matter, if it does not take care of itself, with less friction without a written covenant, than with one. The *Third Article* provides that the United General Assembly shall adjust the boundaries of the synods and presbyteries. It will have the right to fix the boundaries of synods, under the constitution, and it is best to leave the boundaries of the presbyteries to the synods, where it is left by the constitution. This article is therefore, to say the least, unnecessary. The *Fourth Article* provides that: "The official records of the two churches, for the period of separation, shall be preserved, and held as making up the one history of the church." This is the necessary result of the union of two independent bodies, on equal terms.

It may be well, however, for the Assemblies, in the act of union, to state the fact that the two bodies unite as independent churches of equal standing and authority, though this would be the case if no formal recognition were made of it. This article also provides that, "No rule of precedent, which does not stand approved by both bodies, shall be of any authority until reestablished in the united body." There is no practical need of this provision. In the case of conflicting precedents, the united body must decide, and in the case of precedents of one body, not approved by the other, or in regard to which the other body had not acted, such precedents could not become of effect but by action of the united body reestablishing them. If a body is not bound by its own precedents, but may change them, much more is it not bound by precedents approved by only one of its constituent parts. The united body could not apply such a precedent, without in the very act approving it, and thereby reestablishing it. So, then, this part of the article is unnecessary also. If the Old School Assembly, before the union, were to abolish the imperative clause of the Examination Rule of 1837, there would be no conflict in regard to examination, or any other question, and perhaps no rule or precedent left, of any importance, that did not stand approved by both bodies. The *Fifth*, *Sixth*, *Seventh*, *Eighth*, and *Ninth Articles* are as unnecessary as the first four. The consolidation of the corporate rights of the two bodies, and their application to their proper uses, the reconstruction of the various Committees and Boards, and the views and wishes of the Church in regard to Theological Seminaries, the united Assembly could and would carry out without a covenant. In regard to these questions, there is no difference of opinion, and there is no need of any further understanding, or of a contract between the presbyteries. When the Assemblies form the union, it will be sufficient to secure confidence in regard to all these matters, if there shall be a mere statement, perhaps in the preamble of the act of union, recognizing the fact that the expressed mind of the church indicates the proper adjustment of all interests concerned. The Assemblies of 1869 will be in session, in the same place, at the same time, and it will be easy to secure such understanding or action, in each body, before the union, as will assure to each party, that the action of the united body in regard to matters of administration will be such as will be acceptable. No basis is needed but the basis of each church—our common standards. There is not the shadow of danger, that the united Church will do anything against the views which the progress of the discussions and negotiations has shown to prevail among a large majority of both branches.

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